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Organs after Death, But Just 27% of Those Who Wish to
Donate Have Actually Registered To Do So**
*Nine in Ten (90%) Consider Improving Access to Organs for
Those in Need of a Transplant an “Important Priority”
for Canada*

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Majority (51%) of Canadians Have Decided to Donate Organs after Death, But Just 27% of Those Who Wish to Donate Have Actually Registered To Do So

***Nine in Ten (90%) Consider Improving Access to Organs for Those in
Need of a Transplant an “Important Priority” for Canada***

Toronto, ON – Most (95%) Canadians continue to ‘approve’ (69% strongly/26% somewhat) of organ and tissue donation (when people donate their organs or their tissues after death), virtually unchanged from 9 years ago, according to a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Canadian Blood Services.

While a majority (51%) of Canadians have already made the decision to donate their organs at the time of their death, and while four in ten (39%) have made the decision to donate their tissues after death, relatively few have taken the steps to officially register their decision. Among those who have decided to donate their organs or tissues, a majority have spoken to their family about their wishes (84%), signed a donor card (78%) or registered their wishes through their health card (57%), but just three in ten (27%) have actually put their name on a registry that gives permission for their organs or tissues to be used after death.

A likely cause of the relatively low number of intended donors who haven’t registered is due to the fact that seven in ten (68%) cannot even venture a guess at the name of the organization responsible for managing the organ and tissue donation and transplantation system within their province or territory, demonstrating confusion about how to register and with whom.

Canadians appear to believe that health care professionals can have a role in helping Canadians to be informed about their donation options, as most (69%) 'agree' (29% strongly/40% somewhat) that 'it should be mandatory that patients who are critically ill and dying be approached, or in the case that it is not possible, their family members approached by someone in the healthcare system to tell them about their options around organ donation'. Just two in ten (22%) 'disagree' (7% strongly/15% somewhat) with this notion.

When asked about what should happen in a situation where a deceased person has signed an organ-donor card or registered with an organ and tissue donations registry but his or her family does not wish for any organ donation to take place, almost all (88%) Canadians believe that 'the wishes of the deceased person who has signed the donor card or registered with an organ and tissue donation registry' should be followed. Conversely, just one in ten (10%) are of the opinion that 'the wishes of the family or next of kin who oppose the donation' ought to be followed.

A more controversial scenario, however, revolves around the notion of "presumed consent" whereby a deceased person's organs and tissues are transplanted, if considered suitable, unless the person has specifically indicated that this should not happen. While a slim majority (54%) of Canadians 'support' (27% strongly/27% somewhat) this potential remedy for the organ and tissue shortage, four in ten (45%) 'oppose' (26% strongly/19% somewhat) this idea of implied or presumed consent.

The poll also revealed that nine in ten (90%) Canadians consider improving access to organs for those requiring transplants to be an important priority for Canada, while a similar proportion (86%) feels the same way about improving access to tissues for those requiring transplants.



Ipsos Reid

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of Canadian Blood Services from March 24 and 30, 2010. For the survey, a representative randomly-selected sample of 1,500 adult Canadians was interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population of Canada been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure that the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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